(ii) The State Government of Sikkim has constituted a State Level Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary to regularly monitor the progress of implementation of scheme in State.

Contract farming

†1381. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of contract farming in the country;

(b) whether the States are being forced to implement this; and

(c) whether opportunity is also being given to foreign companies for such farming?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTIAL BHURIA): (a) Contract farming is practiced in various parts of the country for crops like sugarcane, cotton, tea, coffee, etc. The main feature of contract farming is that farmers grow selected crops under a buy-back agreement with an agency engaged in trading or processing. By now, in 17 States/Union Territories, relevant provisions have been made in the concerned Agricultural Produce Marketing Regulation Acts for providing a legal framework to contract farming and in seven States/Union Territories there are no regulatory laws preventing such buy-back arrangements. However, in other States also various forms of contract farming do exist in practice. The exact extent of land covered under contract farming in the country is not known. The contract farming is reportedly beneficial to the farmers as it takes care of price risk and also helps in mitigating production risk.

(b) No, Sir. In order to make contract farming arrangements beneficial for the farmers, as well as, the sponsoring companies under a legal framework, suitable provisions were included in the Model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003 and circulated to State Governments for considering suitable amendments in their concerned Act by adopting those provisions. The Model Act circulated by the Ministry is suggestive in nature, and, since Agriculture is a State subject, it is for the State Governments to decide on the implementation of the contract farming arrangements in their State.

(c) At present foreign companies are not reported to be undertaking contract farming in India.

Ensuring minimum income to farmers

†1382. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to constitute a commission to ensure minimum income to the farmers in order to check increasing trend amongst farmers of committing suicides;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the details of the efforts made and achievements attained to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers for their crops, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) The National Commission on Farmers has made recommendations to improve the economic viability of farming by substantially improving the net income of farmers. Based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers the National Policy for Farmers, has been formulated which is under consideration of the Government. There is, however, no proposal to constitute a commission to ensure minimum income to the farmers to check farmers' suicides.

Agricultural extension schemes

1383. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have got any plan to take up Agricultural Extension Schemes for the different States in order to increase production;

(b) whether Government will provide funds to the States for implementing Agricultural Extension Schemes;

(c) if so, whether such schemes would be introduced in Assam; and

(d) the details of the allocation of funds for the said schemes for Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of India had launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" in May, 2005 based on Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) model for promoting farmer friendly extension system.

(b) The resources required for the scheme are shared between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 90:10. Budget estimates of Rs. 230.00 crore has been approved for implementing the scheme for the year 2007-08.

(c) The scheme is under implementation in 12 districts of Assam namely-Bongaigaon, Cachar, Darrang, Golaghat, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Karimganj, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, NC Hills, Sivasagar, Tinsukia. Eleven districts of the State namely-Barpeta, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Hallakandi, Jorhat, Kamrup, Karbi-Anglong, Nalbari, Nowgong, Sonitpur and Dhemaji are having similar facility under Assam Agriculture Competitiveness Project, a World Bank funded project.

(d) The funds under the scheme are released to the States on the basis of approved State Extension Work Plan (SEWP), Performance Report and submission of Utilization Certificate (U.C.), etc.